

Keeping Your Laptop from Being Stolen

The feature we love most about our laptops – mobility – makes them easy targets for thieves. While replacing a stolen laptop can be expensive, the value of the data it contains may well exceed the cost of the laptop itself.

Here are a few tips to protect your laptop and the information it contains:

- **Treat your laptop like cash.** Imagine a stack of money equal to what your laptop is worth. Would you leave that amount of money on a coffee shop table while you refresh your latte? Probably not. Picturing your laptop as a stack of cash will help you to be more vigilant.
- **Keep it locked.** No matter where you are using your laptop, attach it to something immovable or to a heavy piece of furniture with a laptop security cable.
- **Encrypt the data.** You can protect your personal data even if your laptop does go missing by encrypting the hard disk. There are a number of commercial products available that will prevent your laptop from even starting up without a password.
- **Keep your passwords elsewhere.** Leaving your passwords in your laptop carrying case is like leaving the keys in your car. Memorize your passwords or store them securely elsewhere – not in the carrying case or on the laptop itself.
- **Leave your computer bag at home.** When you take your laptop on the road, carrying it in a computer case may advertise what's inside. Consider using a suitcase, a padded briefcase or a backpack instead.
- **Don't leave it in the car.** Not only is the extreme heat and cold in your car bad for your laptop, but parked cars are a favorite target of laptop thieves. If you must leave your laptop in your car, keep it out of sight by placing it in the trunk.
- **Pay close attention at airport security checkpoints.** The chaos and confusion at airport security checkpoints make them perfect for laptop thieves. Additionally, because so many laptops look the same, it is easy to pick up the wrong one on the other side of the screener. Mark your laptop distinctly so that you can easily track it as you go through security. Hold onto it until the person in front of you has gone through the metal detector – and keep an eye out when it emerges on the other side of the screener.
- **Be vigilant in hotels.** Try not to leave your laptop out inside your hotel room while you are out. Instead, take it with you or use the safe in your room if there is one.
- **Report it promptly.** If your laptop is stolen, report it immediately to the local authorities. If it's your business laptop that's missing, also immediately notify your employer.